

This excerpt is from Jeff Tarrant, PhD, BCN's new book, "Becoming Psychic: Lessons from the Minds of Mediums, Healers, and Psychics." Reprinted with permission from Health Communications, Inc.

## CHANNELING SHAMANS

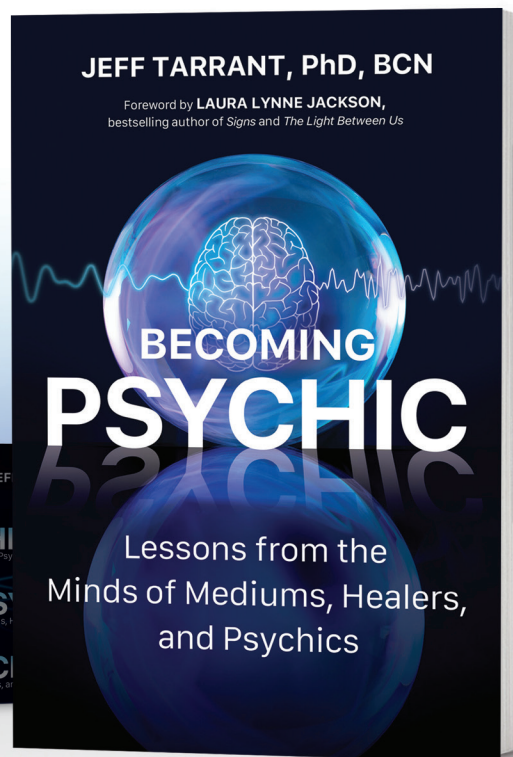
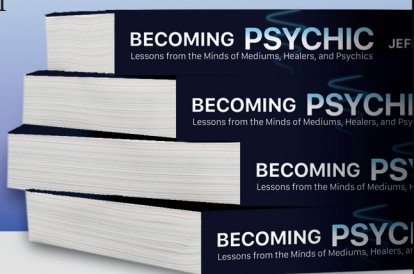
IN 2013, MY EXPOSURE TO PEOPLE with "extraordinary abilities" was virtually nonexistent—but that was all about to change. At the time, I was working at the University of Missouri as a health psychologist in the student health center. In this position, I was largely responsible for developing a campus-wide, stress-management, biofeedback program.

After about a year of piloting this program, we received a nice-sized grant that allowed us to purchase biofeedback software and sensors for all of the computer labs on campus. The grant also allowed me to hire two undergraduate students to assist in the program; enter Kelcie and Matt. I met them about a year before when they attended one of our early biofeedback courses. They were motivated and quick learners, so I was excited to make them part of the team. During their tenure with our program, I saw them several times a week and got to know them quite well. At the end of their appointment, they were both graduating and getting ready to move into the next phase of their lives.

At a farewell/thank you dinner, Matt announced that he wanted to tell us about his mother. He seemed nervous and cautious, and I had absolutely no idea what was coming next. Why was he acting so weird? I felt like he was getting ready to tell me some bad news and I was bracing myself. Matt proceeded to tell us a long and complicated story about his mother, Janet Mayer. Apparently, she began spontaneously speaking South American tribal languages several years before this conversation, after participating in a holotropic breathwork session. What a relief! No bad news after all. Wait, what!? Spontaneously speaking South American tribal languages after participating in holotropic breathwork? I can see why he would be cautious about sharing this news. This sounded a bit crazy. Apparently, he had waited an entire year to tell me about this because he wanted to make sure I would be open to the story. I guess I passed the test.

### Holotropic Breathwork

If you are not familiar with it, holotropic breathwork or HB is a deep and rapid breathing technique that is used in combination with evocative music to induce an altered state of consciousness. Typically, the process is done with a partner in a group setting. One person acts as a "sitter" and is there for anything the breather might need during the session: help getting to the bathroom, Kleenex, a blanket. The breather inhales deeply through the nose and lets all the air out through the mouth, repeating this with no pauses and at a somewhat quickened pace. You keep this breathing going for an hour or more. Typically, after twenty to thirty minutes, consciousness shifts into a full-blown psychedelic state. This state is enhanced by the setting created by the facilitators and the sounds and energy of the other people in the room. Having participated in a few of these myself, I have seen people writhing on the floor, crying, yelling, curled in a ball, and laughing hysterically (not all at the same time, of course). The experience often results in a release of emotions tied to previous hurts and traumas, or realizations about oneself that can be used for personal growth. For most people, it is a powerful and intense process.



Matt explained that his mother attended two of these workshops with her sister, Debbie. The first session was typical. Janet had some insights about herself and felt completely at rest in a state of bliss after her turn being the breather. Months later, when they returned for a second workshop, things went a bit differently. In the middle of her turn as the breather, Janet sat upright and began speaking an unknown language, at least it sounded like a language, but nothing she had ever heard before. Aside from one year of high school Spanish, Janet had never studied any other language besides English, had never been out of the United States, and had no idea what she was saying—if anything. These words were just flowing out of her. After the holotropic breathwork session ended, Janet went home excited and a little scared about what had happened. She began slowly telling her family and friends about the experience and quickly found that she could still access this ability. Simply by shifting her awareness, she could turn it on, and the language(s) would just pour out. In fact, at the beginning, the languages sometimes seemed to have a mind of their own, spontaneously erupting without an invitation. Eventually, Janet learned how to control the languages, allowing them to come through only when she chose. Of course, at this point, she wasn't even certain that this was a language. It felt like a language, but nobody seemed to recognize it. It was possible that she was just making up sounds that gave the appearance of a language.

It turns out that there are at least a few well-known conditions in which people begin spontaneously speaking another language—or what sounds like a language. Glossolalia is the practice of “speaking in tongues,” that occurs in certain Pentecostal and charismatic Christian churches. With glossolalia, what is spoken is not recognized as a language and there is generally not any interest or attempt to translate what is said. Instead, this practice is typically seen as a sign of the Holy Spirit taking over the physical body. Xenoglossy is the phenomenon of speaking another language of which the person previously had no knowledge. This is obviously rare, and considered controversial. Most xenoglossy cases are connected to hypnotic states or believed to be in connection to some kind of retained memory from a past life. If Janet's experience was glossolalia, it was certainly a very different manifestation than most known cases. First, it wasn't happening in the context of an ecstatic religious ritual. Second, it kept happening spontaneously after the first incident: in the grocery store, while driving her car, or cooking dinner. It didn't quite seem to be xenoglossy either. If Janet was speaking a language, she had no idea what she was saying, so it was not functional in the same way as other reported cases. So what was happening?

## The Language(s)

Since the process began, Janet had been recording herself during these language experiences and sending the tapes to professors and researchers from all over the United States. While many of the experts were polite, they had no idea how to help. Other times Janet would receive a response suggesting that she was psychotic or suggesting that this was glossolalia and simply gibberish. Being tenacious, she kept at it and, after four years of searching, eventually found someone who was willing and able to translate these languages. The late Dr. Bernardo Peixoto, an anthropologist at the Smithsonian Institution and a shaman, was originally from the Urueu-Wau-Wau tribe in Northern Brazil, where he was known as Ipupiara or Ipu. He recognized something in Janet's language and indicated that she was speaking Yanomami, a South American tribal language. This was the confirmation Janet had been looking for. Even though she didn't know what she was saying, she always felt that there was a meaning behind the sounds—that they weren't just nonsense. When her exact words were translated, they generally took the form of prayers and teachings related to honoring Mother Earth. Over time, Ipu translated several tapes and reported that Janet was also sometimes speaking several other South American tribal dialects including Fulnio, Tukano, and Kanamari. All of this information, taken together, suggested that Janet was somehow channeling several people, beings, or entities.

